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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000111

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: BURMA'S NLD: NO PRECONDITIONS FOR DIALOGUE WITH
REGIME OR FOR SYG BAN VISIT; REFERENCE TO SANCTIONS ISSUE

REF: RANGOON 96

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Classified By: P/E Chief Jennifer Harhigh for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

A priority; not a pre-condition for SYG Ban visit

11. (U) In a "Special Statement" dated February 19, the National League for Democracy (NLD) Central Executive Committee (CEC) clarified it has not set any preconditions for a visit to Burma by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. The CEC notes that during a February 2 meeting, UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari informed Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) and the CEC that UNSYG Ban wants to visit Burma, but only if the trip would produce a "tangible result." According to the statement, Gambari asked ASSK and the CEC for their top-priority "tangible result;" in response they cited the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners. The statement adds that it "is obvious...the NLD had not set any precondition regarding the visit of...(SYG) or regarding the meaningful dialogue between the SPDC and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi." The statement adds that during the February 2 meeting, Gambari, Aung San Suu Kyi, and the CEC discussed the release of all political prisoners, the importance of face-to-face dialogue between Than Shwe and ASSK, and the need to review the May 2008 constitution.

The UN and the 2010 elections

12. (U) In a separate release also dated February 19, the NLD criticized a joint statement by Gambari and the Japanese Foreign Minister that urged the regime to abide by international standards in the 2010 elections. The NLD expressed concern that the joint Gambari-Japanese statement is inconsistent with efforts to begin genuine dialogue and with the UN General Assembly's commitment to recognize the results of the 1990 elections. The statement praised the UN's efforts and reiterated the party's commitment to work with the UN to foster genuine dialogue with the regime.

NLD ready for dialogue without preconditions;

a confusing mention of "economic sanction"

13. (C) In a previous statement dated February 17, the NLD CEC said it "welcomes the pronouncement by the authorities that the door is always open for dialogue" and it called for "an immediate face to face dialogue (between Aung San Suu Kyi and Than Shwe) without any preconditions." The statement criticizes regime rhetoric claiming, among other things, that ASSK supports "confrontation, utter devastation, economic sanction, and embargo." The CEC statement says such concepts "are not beneficial for the country and its people." For that reason, ASSK had informed the regime "that she is ready to cooperate to avoid these matters" and to reach agreements. The February 17 NLD statement confirms what CEC member Khin Maung Swe told Charge on Feb. 12, that the NLD would publicly renew its willingness to engage in unconditional dialogue (Reftel). So far, the regime has not publicly responded to any of the three statements.

Comment

14. (C) Through these statements, the NLD seems to be trying to portray itself as flexible and open to dialogue, perhaps in response to SYG Ban's call on both sides to be less rigid. The NLD has now gone public for the first time welcoming a Ban visit without preconditions, in contrast to the party's private message to Gambari that a Ban visit should be contingent on the release of all political prisoners. The aim appears to be to shift the onus for the lack of dialogue squarely on the regime.

15. (C) Some international media have reported that the

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convoluted CEC language about "economic sanction" (one translator from the Burmese put as "economic isolation and comprehensive sanctions") signals an NLD rejection of international sanctions as a tool with Burma. As we reported reftel, CEC member Khin Maung Swe told Charge last week the NLD is considering a public statement that would propose for the U.S. to engage with the regime, with sanctions an item on the table. Khin Maung Swe did not suggest an NLD rejection of sanctions as such, just an acknowledgment that adjustment of sanctions might be a carrot in the give and take of negotiations. We will attempt to clarify the CEC's current perspective.
DINGER